Ruin and Rescue in Buffalo

By a Citizen

"I AM familiar with the slums of New York, I know Boston's infected district, I have explored Whitechapel, and I know what the word 'slums' means; but I have never seen a place where vice is so flagrant and where so little attempt is made at concealment as in Buffalo." These are the words of one who had nothing to gain by exaggeration, and the facts seem to bear out his statement.

Much of this moral degradation arises from the geographical position of the city. Situated at the foot of the upper lakes and at the head of the Erie Canal, forming, with its suburb, Tonawanda, the first lumber port of the world, itself the greatest grain port, and visited by twenty-three railroads, Buffalo not only employs an unusually large number of laborers, but is the rendezvous of thousands upon thousands of drifting, homeless men.

The location of the slums is also an important factor in the problem. The infected district, in area not more than one two-hundredth of the city, lies between the canal and the slips, the river and the lake, in such a way that it is almost completely isolated. The highways of travel have left it on one side almost entirely; nine-tenths of the respectable citizens have never been in the slums, except as they may have come from curiosity, or to do city mission work. On the other hand, people are sometimes born and brought up in the slums without ever once visiting the respectable parts of the city. The resident population of this region is estimated at about three thousand, the population of Buffalo being considerably over a quarter of a million. Strange as it may seem, this isolated section can be reached by a three minutes' walk from the richest part of Main Street. It is within a shorter distance from the fashionable St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral.

The policy of the police has been to allow vice and crime to concentrate within this limited area, thinking that in this way the rest of the city could be more easily controlled, and that the disorderly element could at least be held within definitely localized bounds. Considering this dangerous class as hopelessly beyond control, they made no effort, apparently, to restrict its conduct till within the last six months.

Even Buffalonians find it hard to believe the actual facts of the result of this policy. The artery of the whole district is Canal Street, famous as "the wickedest street in the world." It is almost a solid mass of saloons, brothels, dives, and depots for the reception of stolen goods, with two missions and a half-dozen little shops sprinkled in. There are twoscore concert-saloons (only fourteen are licensed) in full blast, afternoon and evening, advertising free shows or five-cent shows, under fancy names. These are all brothels. In fact, no saloon in the street is free from this curse. If the women do not lodge under the saloon-keeper's roof, they drink at his bar. The number of fallen women on the street is estimated at over three hundred. All this would be bad enough if it were concealed; but there is no thought of concealment. Doors and windows are flung open, light streams from cellars as well as from the more prosperous establishments, tin-pan pianos are pounded, squeaky fiddles add to the din, and women are screeching vile songs at the top of their voices. Policemen, in twos for self-protection, patrol the street. At present, drunkenness and fighting in the street are followed by prompt arrest, and the patrol-wagon is running almost constantly between Canal Street and the police headquarters; but fighting and crime indoors are seldom meddled with. Murders are frequent. If the victim is a denizen of the street, a strict investigation is not likely to be made.

The Canal Street din is in full blast till after midnight. At noon the street wakes up again, and the afternoon's work is begun. The crowds begin to congregate, the women appear at doors and windows, and the music starts up. A viler crowd can hardly be found. Criminals who have been hunted out of other cities are very apt to hide here. Said one of the oldest detectives in the city: "I never had occasion to look up a prominent crime but sooner or later, either for witnesses, or for the sale of stolen goods, or for the crime itself, I have been invariably led to Canal Street." A policeman says: "It is hard to find any middle-aged man born and brought up in Canal Street and living there now. Them that ain't dead are in prison." Arrests are often made wholesale. Sometimes as many as two hundred will be carried to the station in a few days, many of them only on suspicion. This is what the police call "cleaning up the street." Patrolmen take turns in Canal Street work, in order that all may become familiar with the beat, for there the worst criminals in the city are to be seen. Branching out from Canal Street in several directions are other streets nearly as bad. Solid rows of saloons on Erie and Commercial Streets, concert-saloons, and numerous houses of ill fame extend the evil far beyond the limits of this sin-cursed thoroughfare.

Such is the ruin of human hopes, character, and life in the slums of Buffalo; but this article never would have been written if there were not a means of rescue. Much seems discouraging and much seems hopeless, but there is a bright side to the story, after all. Three missions have been established in this leprous district, and, small though the rift in the clouds is to-day, the light is beginning to shine in. Just how to reclaim the lost humanity that chooses to stay lost rather than try to save itself is a discouraging problem. Save a drunkard's soul and not his surroundings, and his soul will soon be lost again. Save his surroundings and not his soul, and he will presently make his new surroundings as bad as the old.

In the slums of Buffalo an incorporated company, composed of representative business men and known as the Christian Homestead Association, is sucoessfully solving the problem. The Association is operating two institutions at once, each playing into the other's hands—a boarding and lodging house and a mission.

The "Homestead," 84 and 86 Lloyd Street, is a five-story building, providing ten-cent lodging for 150 men, meals at corresponding rates, a free reading-room, a free laundry (the men washing their own clothes there), and free baths. The lodging-house is clean, the ventilation successful, and the plumbing excellent. The beds are such as are used in modern hospitals. Every man has a locker, large enough to hold two suits of clothes. A fumigating room is also a necessity. The "Homestead" is under the management of Mr. W. G. Rhoades.

The first year of the Association's work has just closed. The total attendance at the mission meetings was 18 425; the number professing a desire to lead a better life, 1 857. The lodging-house and restaurant are more than self-supporting, even at the cheap rates charged. Temporary assistance in the way of shelter and meals, giving of second-hand clothing, and securing situations, is provided at the discretion of the Superintendent.

The Rescue Mission Hall is located at 163 Canal Street, where service is held every evening. The audiences are of the very lowest class—penniless, friendless, hopeless, many of them partly intoxicated, nearly all ruined through drink. A short Gospel service is held, followed by the converts of the mission telling how they have been saved, and an invitation is given to all to accept the same means.

This appears to be a peculiarly discouraging work, but the fact is no mission anywhere seems to be accomplishing better practical results. It is difficult to believe the fine-looking, well-dressed converts as they tell the story of their once degraded lives. This entire work is under the superintendence of Mr. Walter N. Hinman, an ex-newspaper man and author.

The work among the fallen women is carried on by Miss Cutter, who since 1889 has given her life to this forbidding field. Accustomed to the refined surroundings of a

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cultured home, she has voluntarily sought to devote herself to the needs of the most degraded. The consecration and fearless obedience of this brave woman lend inspiration to many a weaker life; and the fact that she is an unpaid worker adds a new element of heroism to her character.

Little children, with dirty but innocent faces, playing at the doors of the vilest dens in the slum, fill the visitor with a sickening sense of the awfulness of this degraded life. A kindergarten has been established directly over the mission, and is doing an incalculable amount of good. A large Sunday-school is in successful operation, and at the close of the service a Bible class for men is largely attended. A Saturday afternoon sewing-school for girls is also a valuable feature of the enterprise. All this work for the children is under the general direction of the Association's missionary, Miss Grein.

A few questions remain to be answered. How is this work maintained? A gift of $10,000 from a friend unknown, put into the hands of a board of trustees, gave the institution a start and established its plant. The contingent expenses have been met by subscriptions raised by the trustees. There is need of an extension of the work, and of money to accomplish such extension. Another question is, In what spirit is this rescue work received by the denizens of the slums? A dive across the way has adopted the title of "Life-Saving Station," in derision of the mission. For twenty drinks any saloon-keeper in the place could doubtless get a crowd of toughs to clean out the mission-hall pretty effectually; but the prominence of the trustees is a constant protection, and on the whole the mission commands the respect, and in many cases the good will, of the toughest inmates of the Canal Street dives. One more question: How much real good is the mission doing? It is at least bringing the Gospel message to thousands of the very lowest. Many of the converts continue to live in Buffalo, and come back to the mission night after night to testify of the power that saved them; but the vast majority of those who desire a change of life are transients, and it is impossible to judge of the permanency of the help they have received. Many, doubtless, never live up to the faith they have professed, but they have had every chance given them that consecrated ingenuity can devise.

Church Music[1]

By Charles H. Morse[2]

If "music is a pattern and type of heaven," then, indeed, are those whose mission is to provide the music for our worship burdened with a weight of responsibility and called to a blessed ministry second only to that of the pastor who stands at the desk to speak the words of Life.

Behind them is the inspiration of ages of worshipers in song. As we read history we see in every direction that the great civilizer has always been, as it is to-day, Christianity; as in letters, so also in music, the greatest development has been in and through the Church.

We look from the gorgeous antiphonal service of the Jewish Temple through the gropings of the early Christian Church, when the Christians comforted themselves, hidden in the Catacombs, with songs of faith, to the time when another marvelous ceremonial held sway in the Eternal City, and the Papal choir, the foremost musical organization of Europe, containing nearly every famous master of the world, elaborated and degraded music till secularism and artificiality usurped the place of purity and naturalness, and the "Savior of Music" appeared in Palestrina, to restore the spiritual element and pure form, and again make music the handmaid of religion; from the time of St. Ambrose and Pope Gregory, with their modes and solemn chants, through the Reformation, when Martin Luther not only fired all Europe by his eloquence, but also inspired it by his hymns and chorals, leading his choir boys in song, to "the culmination of Protestantism in music" in the master of masters, John Sebastian Bach, still the admiration and model of all true artists, in life and work.

What do we not owe, in music, to the Church?

The panorama or outlook is a glorious and inspiring one for the earnest worker.

The power of music, as all will acknowledge, is illimitable. "No other art, no other mode of impression, equals music in its power to awaken a common feeling." The "Marseillaise" makes every Frenchman a hero; the "Watch on the Rhine" rouses all Germany; and Julia Ward Howe's magnificent "Battle Hymn of the Republic" stirs every drop of blood in the true American. For every occasion, whether of joy or sorrow, we have our song to intensify expression; and in the supreme act of life, the worship and adoration of the Creator and Redeemer of all mankind, music finds its highest use, its proper place, its truest and most powerful expression.

> Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
> The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.
>
> God is its author, and not man. He laid
> The keynote of all harmonies; He planned
> All perfect combinations; and He made
> Us so that we could hear and understand.

Its place in the Church is ministerial: to prepare the listeners for sincere worship by its inherent sacredness, comforting them, leading them, in the prayer of penitence, the cry for mercy, or the rapture of praise and adoration, to the very gates of heaven. Many an organist has had such an experience, and been taken out of himself in the expression of what is impossible in words, seeing a whole congregation moved as by the very Spirit of God.

What of our church music to-day? Is it what it should be? What can we do for it? It is a matter for comfort and congratulation that there is, all over our land, a rapidly increasing demand for *only* the truly sacred music in our Protestant churches. Our worship is becoming more sincere, and music, as the universal act of worship, is having its true place and effect.

Time was when the arrangement of secular waltz melodies, popular songs, and favorite operatic gems to our most beautiful hymns was demanded in fashionable churches; and not a few able American composers, whose names are very familiar, have degraded the sacred service and themselves by setting inspired words to trivial, secular melodies because they would sell; but such work is finding its proper level.

The quartette choirs, of limited répertoire, are being supplemented by carefully selected, well-balanced chorus choirs, making possible all combinations for the adequate rendition of selections from the oratorios and masses, as well as the masterly anthems of the English school, admirable in form, reverent in expression, full of beautiful melody. A school of American composition is being rapidly developed which has already given us works in every form comparing favorably with the *best* produced abroad; and the répertoire of organist and choirmaster is filled with real religious music from all sources, full of originality and the true spirit of worship. With such a storehouse at hand, who shall limit the possibilities for good which are in the hands of every worthy church musician?

We should study, first, to make our service a unit, conferring often with the pastor, keeping "in touch" with him and the people, ministering with him, as is our highest privilege.

Let the prelude (which is the beginning of service, and not the signal for social converse), as far as possible, prepare the listeners for worship, both by its musical beauty and its strictly religious character; the anthems (whether chanted or sung) be done with absolute technical accuracy and freedom, and the utmost sympathy and reverence. The choir must feel the words as they sing (and the choirmaster make this his constant instruction), or they cannot make the listeners feel them. They must lead the worship in spirit as well as in song, and can destroy the effect of

[1] A paper read before the New York State Teachers' Association at Syracuse, June 29, 1892.

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